

150

July 1960



THE PENGUIN PLAYERS

Ten years in Bexhill



Souvenir booklet

Two shillings



*A message from His Worship the Mayor of Bexhill,
Alderman Reginald F. Botting, J.P.*

I am very glad of this opportunity to say a few words on this 10th anniversary of the coming to Bexhill of "The Penguin Players." They came to us in July 1950 and have now become a valued institution in the town. They have during their 10 years with us presented between four and five hundred plays, besides producing for us every year a highly successful pantomime at Christmas time.

While they have opened Repertory in other places, including Eastbourne, they have always had their headquarters in Bexhill which has become home to them.

It is true that Repertory today has had to meet the competition of the television, but, in my view, that competition is gradually diminishing, and I do hope that all lovers of good Repertory will give the "Penguin Players" continued support and encouragement to provide us, as always, with entertainment of a stimulating and worth-while character.

REGINALD F. BOTTING,
Mayor



Photo by Walter Effner, Bexhill

Back row : Barbara Payne (secretary), Michael Berry, Alan Tucker, Oliver Fisher, Bathia Saye MacGregor, John Carter, Robert Howard, Michael Napier-Brown and David Blake. Front row : Richard Burnett, Barbara Miller, Jennifer Wood, Peggy Paige, Vilma Hollingbury and Jennifer Nimmo.

Wishing the Penguin Players good luck in all their enterprises !

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Messages from Friends in Bexhill . . .

On your talented Company's completion of ten fruitful years' continuous Repertory in Bexhill-on-Sea, I am happy to send you congratulations and very good wishes for the future, on behalf of my Committee and myself. In these ten years "the Penguins" have given wonderful entertainment and great enjoyment to many thousands of townspeople and visitors and have contributed much to the high reputation of Bexhill-on-Sea as a cultural centre. Wishing you and your Company continuous success.

ALLAN S. J. STEVENS

(Chairman, Borough Entertainments Committee,
May 1960)

It was during my term of office as Mayor that the Penguin Players came to the town and after their first performance—a first-rate interpretation of Somerset Maugham's play, "The Constant Wife," with the then most meagre equipment at the Egerton Park Pavilion—it was my privilege and pleasure to voice a welcome and to offer some modest hospitality. The simple fact that for ten years they have retained the support and affection of the town's regular playgoers indicates more clearly than any personal appreciation of their work and talents could, the quality and acceptability of their contribution to the cultural life of Bexhill.

CLAUDE PYCROFT (Alderman)
(Mayor of Bexhill, 1950/52)

Dear Dickie,

It seems a long time since we had a party to welcome you, and your company, to the Pavilion. Repertory had been at a low ebb for some time, and I had the honour to be the chairman of the "Repertory Club." In this capacity I think I was probably the first citizen to greet you on arrival. Since then the "Penguins" have become a very important part of the social life of the town, and long may continue to be so. Sincerely yours,

GILBERT H. GOODWIN (Alderman)
(Chairman of Entertainments Committee in 1950
and subsequently Mayor for two years)

Many congratulations on your 10th anniversary, like many others, we shall be looking forward to your 21st. Best wishes for all success in the future.

JOHN BAKER, EILEEN BAKER
(Mayor and Mayoress, 1958/1960)

The Penguin Players are to be congratulated not only on the tremendous pleasure that they have afforded to residents of Bexhill over the past 10 years, but for their initiative in organising a Theatre Exhibition. Such an exhibition should prove both entertaining and instructive. For a town of approximately 25,000 residents, it is a considerable achievement to maintain repertory regularly throughout the year, and in these days of competitive alternative sources of entertainment it speaks highly for the variety and quality of the plays that have been presented by the Penguin Players over these past 10 years that it is still possible, in this modern world, to present the "living theatre" continuously. Bexhill is indeed fortunate in this avenue of its community life, and I hope that it will so continue for many, many years to come.

A. GARDNER

(Chairman of the Association of Bexhill Citizens)

In July this year the Penguin Players will complete ten years of Repertory in the two theatres owned by our town. During this time they will have played 455 plays by the best known authors in our language, with Shakespeare, Shaw, Sheridan and Arthur Miller taking their places beside Coward, Ben Travers, Rattigan and Agatha Christie. As we reach this fresh milestone we realise the vital part the Repertory Theatre plays in the communal life of our Borough. The talent and versatility displayed, coupled with the wide variety of plays produced, has brought pleasure to many of our citizens, laughter to the sad and weary, thought to the serious-minded, and to the connoisseur a high standard of acting and stage technique. We express the very sincere hope that we can rely on the people of Bexhill to continue to support the company, so that we can look forward to the Twentieth Anniversary of the Penguin Players in Bexhill, still controlled by Richard Burnett and his charming wife Peggy Paige. Good luck to all the Penguin Players!

E. L. LILLICRAP
(Chairman of the Penguin Players Ltd)

Good luck, Penguins !

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Messages from leading members of the Theatrical Profession . . .

My congratulations to the Penguin Players. May the next ten years bring you even greater success. All best wishes.

RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH

Congratulations on your achievement. Having had eight years' Repertory experience myself, I realise how important it is to keep Repertory alive. Good luck.

DORA BRYAN

My hearty congratulations to the Penguin Players on the completion of a decade of Repertory in Bexhill! A magnificent achievement when "The 'Fifties" have spelt death to so many provincial Repertory Theatres. Here's to 1970!

IAN CARMICHAEL

My congratulations to all members of the Penguin Players on your 10th anniversary of continuous Repertory, and my best wishes for a successful Festival and all your future ventures.

JOHN GIELGUD

Many, many congratulations on your ten years of Repertory and all my very best wishes for your future.

KAY HAMMOND

Repertory is the backbone of the theatrical profession. It has been and always will be responsible for supplying the British theatre with West End talent. I congratulate the Penguin Players on its 10th anniversary and sincerely hope that it will flourish as long as there are theatres in this country.

JACK HYLTON

My dear Dickie,

I am delighted to wish you and your Penguin Players many more happy years at Bexhill. We are all aware of the work you are doing, not only for Repertory, but for the Theatre. This is a fine achievement. Congratulations.

EMRY'S JONES

Congratulations and very good wishes to the Penguin Players.

MARGARET LEIGHTON

Congratulations and good luck to the Penguin Players. Long may you flourish and I hope it will be my pleasure to send greetings when you come of age.

EMILE LITTLER

Dear Richard,

How fine of the Penguin Players to have done ten years (hard labour!). May they and you keep going, with great success, for many years more. Good luck. Yours

RALPH LYNN

Heartiest congratulations on ten years' good work—and my very best wishes for the Festival and for the Players' future success.

ALAN MELVILLE

Good luck to the Penguin Players, and British Repertory, the only real training ground for the actor.

KENNETH MORE

Congratulations on Penguin Players 10th anniversary and our best wishes for enormously continued success.

ANDRE MORELL and
JOAN GREENWOOD

Congratulations on ten years' wonderful achievement. Keep on with the good work.

PEGGY MOUNT

May I congratulate you upon your unbroken run of ten years. A great achievement in these days, when so many theatres are closing. All good wishes for the future. Sincerely yours,

ANNA NEAGLE

Penguins are charming creatures, they seem to like a cold climate, I hope now they will not mind if I send them warmest good wishes!

RALPH RICHARDSON

This is to wish the Penguin Players a very happy and successful 10 anniversary.

FLORA ROBSON

* * * * *

**The Penguin Players can be heard
from any seat in the house . . .**

**. . . Ear Piercing is also one of our
specialities !**

* * * * *

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My dear Peggy and Richard,

What a wonderful achievement—ten years continuous Repertory in Bexhill. My wife and I never miss an opportunity of seeing your plays, and many times we have been present at a first performance, and have always admired the perfect timing and your wonderful attention to detail. I am a great admirer of the straight theatre, and I can honestly say that in many cases I have seen you and your excellent company present plays that we have seen in the West End, and your presentation has quite been up to their standard. I often wonder if the public realise the amount of work and thought you have to put in, to give such a polished performance. Of course, the answer is—that you are still there and just as popular after ten years, and if I may say so, ten very difficult years, when you have had to fight T.V., etc. May your success continue is the sincere wish of, yours very truly,

SANDY POWELL

Dear Penguins.—A decade has gone
Since you made your appearance,
But your success goes on and on
(So proud your perseverance);
Your evening dress you proudly wear
Before the Stage Footlightness,
Oh yes—and may your bold affront
Improve with Perfect Whiteness.

Sincerely,
TED RAY

Warmest congratulations from a fugitive from repertory at Liverpool, Birmingham, etc., now involved in "Twinkle" but often envying and longing to be associated again with the backbone of the legitimate theatre, i.e. repertory actors and actresses, like you beloved Penguins. We greet you sincerely and wish your Festival an enormous success.

CLARKSON ROSE and
OLIVE FOX
(*"Twinkle," Worthing*)

Messages from other Repertory Theatre . . .

To have begun a theatrical enterprise in this section of the century was courageous, but to have survived and made progress shows the right spirit indeed. Very many congratulations and all good wishes for the future.

SIR BARRY JACKSON
Birmingham Repertory Theatre

Congratulations! We have long admired all that you and Peggy are doing for the Theatre in the Provinces and for Bexhill in particular, and we hope that you will continue your work with success for many tens of years to come. Yours,

PEGGY ANN and
RONALD RUSSELL
Little Theatre, Bristol.

Congratulations on completing ten years' splendid work. The town of Bexhill may count their live theatre among their prime assets. Long may you continue to provide what is so evidently of value to its people.

PETER GOSS
(*Director of Productions,
Bromley Repertory*)

To Dickie and Peggy,

My affections will always be with the Penguin Players in Bexhill. You gave me a wonderful start in my career for which I shall always be grateful. May the Penguin Players prosper for many years to come. All good wishes,

ANTHONY CORNISH
(*General Manager, Civic
Theatre, Chesterfield*)

Congratulations, Penguins. May you live as long as we have done, and always be as good as you are now. Here's to the next ten years. Greetings and good wishes.

ARTHUR BROUGH
(*The Arthur Brough Players,
Leas Pavilion, Folkestone*)

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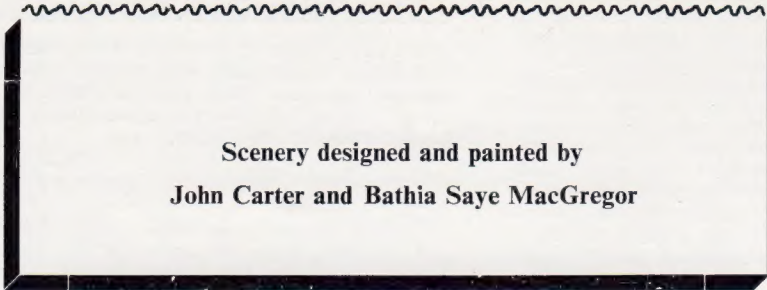
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Everyone at the Mermaid Theatre sends best wishes to the Penguin Players for the completion of 10 years' work. As it is now ten years since the idea of the Mermaid first hit me, I know the feeling. They tell me the second ten years will be easier. Best wishes,

BERNARD MILES
(Mermaid Theatre, London)

Warmest good wishes for your continued success from everyone at the Old Vic.

MICHAEL BENTHALL
(Director, Old Vic)

Congratulations to the Penguin Players on reaching their tenth birthday and my best wishes for their continued success in presenting "live theatre" in this age of automation.

GEOFFREY OST
(Producer, Sheffield
Repertory Company)

All of us at the Theatre Royal, Windsor, send our warmest congratulations to the Penguin Players and their indefatigable director and his wife for completing ten years' devoted service to the theatregoers of Bexhill. Long may they continue.

JOHN COUNSELL
(Windsor)

Ten years' continuous Repertory is a wonderful achievement, and the British Drama League sends sincere congratulations to the Penguin Players on their 10th Birthday.

PETER CARPENTER
(Administrator, British
Drama League)

Messages from former Penguin Players now making their mark in London . . .

Congratulations on ten years of successful Repertory and very happy memories of a wonderful start to my professional life with the Penguin Players.

ANGELA BROWNE

It is a great pleasure for me to have this opportunity of congratulating the Penguin Players on their 10th anniversary at Bexhill. I am extremely proud to have been a member of the Company for over two years, and I look back on that time as being the happiest of my theatrical career. My earnest wishes for your continued success in the next ten years.

Congratulations to Mr. Richard Burnett and Miss Peggy Paige on their staunch leadership throughout all this time, and to all my friends on stage and among the wonderful Bexhill audiences, I send kindest regards and the very best of luck. Keep it up, won't you! For myself may I just say—"Fings ain't wot they used t'be".

MERVYN PASCOE
Garick Theatre

Dear Dickie and Peggy,

I would like to take this opportunity of saying how proud I have been to be able to say that I have worked under the banner of Richard Burnett and the Penguin Players. I have found with pleasure and delight that the reputation of the "Penguins" among actors and audiences alike is one of the finest in the country. Warmest congratulations on having ticked up ten worthwhile years of Repertory, and here's to ten more!

RONNIE PEMBER
Mermaid Theatre

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'The wine-merchants opposite the De La Warr Pavilion'

“Here’s to the next ten!”

by RICHARD BURNETT

THE Penguin Players came to Bexhill in July, 1950, with a contract to play a twelve-weeks season in the Egerton Park Theatre. And here we are, still in the town after ten years—an event which I am sure very few of us who were concerned with that initial production would have considered likely! Perhaps a quick look back over some of the history of those ten years will prove of interest to our present readers.

The company had been newly-formed to carry out this 1950 Summer engagement, and had been named the Penguin Players solely to gratify a whim of my wife, Peggy Paige, who thought the name would be amusing and usefully memorable—which indeed it has proved. We arrived in Bexhill late in June for the final rehearsals, took a closer look at the town than we had previously had, and quite frankly, came to the conclusion that we had been wildly optimistic to expect a Repertory venture to flourish here at all—let alone for the long run for which we had secretly hoped! However, we duly opened on 3rd July with a production of *“The Constant Wife”*, by Somerset Maugham, which seemed to please the rather small audience. The Chairman of the Entertainments Committee, Councillor (now Alderman) Goodwin, welcomed us most encouragingly; and the Mayor, Alderman Pycroft, entertained us most hospitably—introducing and commending us to many prominent citizens who have remained our good friends ever since.

After a somewhat slow start business showed a steady improvement, and before the end of the season we had the “House Full” board out on many occasions. (The first play really to “pack out” was *“The Happiest Days of Your Life”*, which later on in January, 1953, was to be the first play which we ever repeated, when it was again a great popular favourite. I wonder if the time is nearly ripe to present a few of the great favourites like this for even a third time?) The season was extended by an extra week, and we were given a contract to carry straight on at the De La Warr Pavilion.

Our opening company had included, in addition to my wife and myself, Robert Howard as Assistant Producer and a leading actor, and John Carter and his wife, Bathia Saye MacGregor, as Scenic Artists, and we are very pleased indeed to think that these three have so far come all the way with us. We know that their work has given great pleasure to our patrons throughout the years. Also in at the start were Pilton Wilson and his wife, Kathleen Willis, both of whom by their hard work on the acting and the management side did a great deal towards building up our success, and who stayed with the company until October, 1959. The rest of the opening cast included Penelope Garnett, Betty Carter, Miriam Campbell, Katherine Hendy and Derek Jowett, and they were soon joined by Peter Wyatt, Dora Tabberer, Mary Clayton, Christopher Abbott, Hazel Atkinson, Michael Blythe and Jenny Mundy-Castle, all of whom were with us by the start of 1951. Since then a great number of fine actors and actresses have played in our productions, many of whom have gone on to make a name for themselves on the London stage, or on television or other mediums. At the end of this booklet we print a list which we think is reasonably complete, and our supporters may like to amuse themselves by seeing how many of these personalities they can remember. If you can let us know of any inaccuracies or omissions we shall be very interested.

During ten years we have, of course, presented a great number of plays—456 different productions, to be exact, of which a few dozen have been “repeats”. The list includes plays by classical authors (such as Shakespeare, Shaw, Sheridan, Goldsmith, Oscar Wilde), foreign authors (Ugo Betti, Louis Verneuil, Jean Anouilh, Siegfried Geyer and so on), American authors (including Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Garson Kanin, Robert Sherwood) and, of course, nearly all the most famous modern British playwrights, such as

1950

-

LIST OF

1950

Egerton Park Theatre

THE CONSTANT WIFE
THE PATSY
TO HAVE AND TO HOLD
THE AGE OF YOUTH
BLITHE SPIRIT
FOOLS RUSH IN
CLAUDIA
HIGH TEMPERATURE
THE CAT'S CRADLE
THE HAPPIEST DAYS OF
YOUR LIFE
MY MOTHER HAD THREE SONS
GIVE ME YESTERDAY
THE KING'S LEISURE

De La Warr Pavilion

THE GUINEA PIG
THE LAUGHTER OF FOOLS
RANDOM HARVEST
YOUNG WIVES' TALES
JANE STEPS OUT
WRIT FOR LIBEL
THE GIOCONDA SMILE
BUT ONCE A YEAR
DICK WHITTINGTON

1951

De La Warr Pavilion

ON MONDAY NEXT
EDWARD, MY SON
NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH
THE LIGHT OF HEART
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
WE PROUDLY PRESENT
THIS IS MY LIFE
LABURNUM GROVE
THE FOOLISH GENTLEWOMAN
THE UNGUARDED HOUR
THE BLUE GOOSE
I KILLED THE COUNT
HARVEY
MOTHER OF MEN
HIS LORDSHIP'S LADY
BLACK CHIFFON
PYGMALION
HENRY THE FIFTH

Egerton Park Theatre

SHORT STORY
SUMMER IN DECEMBER
THERE'S ALWAYS TO-MORROW
HOME AT SEVEN
LOVER'S LEAP
PEG O' MY HEART
WHAT ANNE BROUGHT HOME
IF THIS BE ERROR
A LADY MISLAID
CASTLE IN THE AIR
THE PERFECT WOMAN
TRAVELLER'S JOY
RESIDENTS ONLY
THE LATE CHRISTOPHER BEAN
SQUARE PEGS
ROBERT'S WIFE

De La Warr Pavilion

QUIET WEDDING
MARY BONAVENTURE
THE HAPPY FAMILY
JANE EYRE
THE FEMININE TOUCH
MURDER AT THE VICARAGE
SPRING TIDE
JUNIOR MISS

1952

St. Barnabas Church

THE BOY WITH A CART

De La Warr Pavilion

CHARLEY'S AUNT
TAKING THINGS QUIETLY
A STREET CAR NAMED DESIRE
THE TOLERANT HUSBAND
SEPTEMBER TIDE
COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS
LITTLE WOMEN
AREN'T WE ALL?
MR. PIM PASSES BY
SEE HOW THEY RUN
HIS EXCELLENCY
THE SEVENTH VEIL
WHO GOES THERE?
IT WON'T BE A STYLISH

MARRIAGE
JUPITER LAUGHS
HERE AND NOW

Egerton Park Theatre

BORN YESTERDAY
ONE WILD OAT
SPRING MEETING
LAURA
TRUTH ABOUT BLAYDS
WHILE THE SUN SHINES
COME LIVE WITH ME
SOMEONE AT THE DOOR
DR. MORELLE
FRENCH WITHOUT TEARS
MEET THE WIFE
JOHNNY BELINDA
ACACIA AVENUE
FRENCH FOR LOVE
OPEN VERDICT
BED, BOARD, AND ROMANCE
FLARE PATH

De La Warr Pavilion

WILL ANY GENTLEMAN?
THE HOLLOW
LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN
IT NEVER RAINS
TO DOROTHY A SON
THE HEIRESS
WORM'S EYE VIEW
THE HOLLY AND THE IVY
ALADDIN

1953

De La Warr Pavilion

A CHRISTMAS CAROL
THE HAPPIEST DAYS OF
YOUR LIFE
BLACK COFFEE
THE WHITE SHEEP OF
THE FAMILY
GRUMPY
WAGGONLOAD O' MONKEYS
MADAM TIC TAC
THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL
LOVE IN IDLENESS
A PRIEST IN THE FAMILY
THE BEST PEOPLE
REBECCA
THE WINSLOW BOY
HER PAST
BLACK LIMELIGHT
FRESH FIELDS
SALOON BAR
EMMA

St. Barnabas Church

THE VIGIL

Egerton Park Pavilion

TOO YOUNG TO MARRY
ROOKERY NOOK
THIS HAPPY BREED
THE BUBBLE
GRAND NATIONAL NIGHT
WIDOWS ARE DANGEROUS
QUIET WEEK-END
YES AND NO
THE HAPPY PRISONER
WITHOUT THE PRINCE
THE FIRST MRS. FRASER
THE POLTERGEIST
ONCE BITTEN TWICE SHY
TELL-TALE MURDER
PAINTED SPARROWS
GLAD TIDINGS
DUSTY ERMINE
JOKING APART
DEVONSHIRE CREAM

De La Warr Pavilion

RELATIVE VALUES
WILD HORSES
PERIL AT END HOUSE
THE BARRETT'S OF
WIMPOLE STREET
THE FAR OFF HILLS
THE UNINVITED GUEST
WATERS OF THE MOON
TURKEY TIME
JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

1954

De La Warr Pavilion

THIRD TIME LUCKY
MURDER MISTAKEN
THE MIDDLE WATCH
THE DEEP BLUE SEA
THE IMPORTANCE OF
BEING EARNEST
INTENT TO MURDER
BEDTIME STORY
THE ORCHARD WALLS
AND NO BIRDS SING
THE DAY'S MISCHIEF
HIS HOUSE IN ORDER
ANASTASIA
THE QUEEN OF DIAMONDS
THE BAD SAMARITAN
FRIENDLY RELATIONS
SUGAR PLUM
CRIME DON'T PAY
THE QUEEN'S HUSBAND
TONIGHT AT 7.45
THE CATHEDRAL
DOWN CAME A BLACKBIRD
MEET MR. CALLAGHAN

Egerton Park Theatre

THE HAPPY MARRIAGE
THE GIFT
AN ANGEL CALLED JEREMY
THE YOUNG IN HEART
LOOPHOLE
TRIAL AND ERROR
LADY LOOK BEHIND YOU
MY WIFE'S LODGER
DIAL "M" FOR MURDER
THE GAY DOG
GOLDEN RAIN
RETURN OF PEGGY ATHERTON
KING OF THE CASTLE
LOVERS' MEETING
SLEEPING PARTNERSHIP

De La Warr

ESCAPADE
FOR BETTER FOR
HOUSEMASTER
A CHANCE OF
DEAR CHARLES
SOMEONE WAIT
THE LADY'S NO
COME BACK PE
MOTHER GOOSE

19

De La Warr

AFFAIRS OF ST
QUESTION OF I
THE BURNING
THE SLEEPING
THE RETURN
THE LITTLE HU
THE SHOP AT
THE GENTLE R
MEET A BODY
WAITING FOR
A CUCKOO IN
THE ROSSITERS
I CAPTURE TH
LARGER THAN
AS LONG AS T
THE PARTY SPI
BOTH ENDS ME
IT'S NEVER TO
THE BLIND CO

Egerton Pa

A PLAY FOR R
THE SECRET TR
THE SACRED FL
HAND TO MOUN
BIRTHDAY HON
FOUR WINDS
THE FACTS OF
WHY NOT TON
THE MOON IS
OFF THE DEEP
THE DASHING V
SLINGS AND A
THE PAY OFF
TO CHRISTABEL
MANHANDLED

De La Warr

IS YOUR HON
REAR
SEAGULLS OVE
WITNESS FOR

I AM A CAMEL
SIT DOWN A M
BOOK OF THE
SABRINA FAIR
BUT ONCE A Y
ROBINSON CRU

19

De La Warr

A CALL ON TH
OVER THE GAR
HONEYPOT
THE LIVING RO
LATE LOVE
FROM CRIME T
SIMON AND LA
MRS. INSPECTO
THE AGE OF Y
SERIOUS CHAR
THE WISE CHIL
MESSAGE FOR
MAD ABOUT M

—

1960

Somerset Maugham, Noel Coward, Terence Rattigan, Robert Morley, R. C. Sherriff, J. B. Priestley, St. John Irvine, A. J. Cronin, James Bridie, Lennox Robinson, Roger MacDougall, Eden Philpotts, N. C. Hunter, Graham Green, Christopher Fry, John Osborne and others far too numerous to mention. We have presented some dozen brand-new plays, most of which have gone on to be played in many other towns. It is difficult to say which has been the most popular play, as it is impossible to assess accurately the effect of varying circumstances such as the time of year, the weather, opposition attractions and so on; but certainly in any short list of our plays at the De La Warr Pavilion I should have to include "Pride and Prejudice", "Charley's Aunt", "Romanoff and Juliet" and all the thrillers of Miss Agatha Christie. While at the Egerton Park Summer Theatre Miss Christie, whose "Spider's Web" easily holds the record, is closely challenged only by "The Reluctant Debutante". I have at all times felt, however, that it is possible in Bexhill to present a wide variety of plays of many types, and that each will be accepted and given due appreciation as long as it is a worthwhile example of its own type. I have been at some pains to avoid plays which can only be expected to appeal to a minority audience, since these I believe to be only rightly presented in towns of much larger populations; those enthusiasts who like them must be prepared to travel. But it has certainly been gratifying to find, in such a comparatively small town, that we can arouse enthusiasm not only for Frederick Lonsdale, Daphne du Maurier and A. A. Milne, but for Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and John Osborne as well. The productions of plays by these authors have brought me only a very small amount of contumelious correspondence!

Most of my present readers will know that it has been the policy of the Bexhill Council to invite us to play in the De La Warr Pavilion for the first five months of the year, then to move over to the Egerton Park Theatre from June till September, and to return to the Pavilion until late in November, when we break off to prepare for our annual pantomime. These were started in our very first year in the town, when we presented "Dick Whittington and his Cat" (a revised version of which was presented last Christmas). So far we have produced nine of them, each with the main parts played by regular members of the Penguin Players, with a troupe of local chorus girls, and with an original book, lyrics and music. I think I can safely claim that they are now one of the outstanding events of each year in Bexhill, and give vast enjoyment to young and old alike. I personally always find a real satisfaction, as I watch the parties arriving for the pantomime, in the thought that these performances will be giving deep pleasure to many who perhaps no longer have the energy or concentration for regular playgoing, as well as their first taste of the magic of the theatre to many who will form the audiences of the future.

We were, I am sure, most fortunate in the way the people of Bexhill took the Penguin Players to their hearts right from the start; and in many ways ours has been a most untroubled history. But the financial situation has by no means been always easy. During the

THE PENGUIN PLAYERS

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last ten years the expenses involved in producing plays professionally have increased by over one hundred per cent—indeed, many theatre-directors of my acquaintance would regard this as a very modest estimate. During the same period we have had to withstand and endure the most serious opposition which has encountered the living theatre since the early days of the “talkies”, in the arrival and growth of television. Whatever one’s opinion of the entertainment value or the ultimate place in the nation’s culture of this new medium, it would be folly not to recognise that from now on it is going to keep a large number of people in their home in the evenings who would otherwise have gone out to find entertainment. And this will be particularly true during the bad weather of the Winter months. Repertory theatres, with their peculiarly loyal supporters, seemed to survive the early years of this competition better than—for instance—the provincial touring theatres, variety theatres or cinemas. But during the last three years, and coinciding with the spread of rediffusion and the easing of hire-purchase restrictions, the effect has been more heavily shown. Nearly every Repertory theatre has experienced a fall in its receipts, and many have had to close (falling a victim in all too many cases to the property-developers who have been waiting to exploit their central positions by building shops, flats or offices). We in Bexhill have been no exception, though perhaps we have been luckier than most—and it should certainly not be forgotten that our regular weekly attendances are still incomparably higher than for those of any town of a similar size throughout the world, with one possible exception. We have been greatly encouraged by the sympathetic co-operation of the Council, the enthusiasm of other bodies such as the Association of Bexhill Citizens, and the loyalty of our solid core of regular supporters. We have effected what economies we reasonably could, and have striven to maintain our standards at all costs. Our first object is to recapture that proportion of attendances which has been lost; not till that has been achieved can we seriously launch any of the plans which we cherish for development and improvements in the future.

In 1956 we thought it suitable to form a non-profit-distributing company, Penguin Players Ltd., to take over the running of the Penguin Players in Bexhill. At the time this was instrumental in relieving us of the burden of Entertainments Tax (which has since been taken off the living theatre altogether). It also meant establishing the Penguin Players as more of a civic enterprise, out of which nobody could take any profit. Penguin Players Ltd. is controlled absolutely by a Board of Directors drawn from well-known local citizens, and which is comprised at present of Councillor E. L. Lillicrap, Mr. A. E. Gardner, Mr. A. L. Kurz and Mrs. E. V. Gibson. All these Directors are entirely honorary, and draw nothing whatever from the Company in return for their services to it. I am employed by them (at a modest but reasonable salary!) as General Manager and Secretary to take complete charge of the day-to-day running of the Company along the lines laid down by the Directors. The two theatres in Bexhill belong, of course, to the town; so that we have a non-profit-distributing Repertory Company controlled by independent local citizens through a professional administrator, performing in theatres owned by the citizens and carefully controlled and supervised by the Borough Council and its Officials. Surely a Civic enterprise in the very best sense!

My wife and I, as most of you will know, have wider theatrical interests including the running of other companies of Penguin Players in such other places as Eastbourne, Clacton and Tunbridge Wells. The organisation which we maintain in Bexhill for these activities, including premises and staff for our office, scenic studio and property store, we have gladly been able to place at the disposal of Penguin Players Ltd. (without any charge), which has certainly made it rather easier to carry on here through the recent difficult years. It has also, perhaps, helped the town a little by bringing in some rates, creating some local employment, and certainly by procuring quite a bit of free publicity wherever our other companies have played. Incidentally, it is perhaps a point not generally appreciated about Repertory wherever it exists that the money spent at Repertory Theatre box offices remains almost completely in the town. Apart from authors’ royalties, which account for about 8 per cent, the remainder of the company’s share is for the most part immediately re-circulated in the form of artists’ food and lodgings and the supply of paint, timber, soft furnishings and other materials required for our productions. In our case, any profits which may be made by the

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Company in the future will be ploughed back and used for improvements and developments of our theatrical service to the town.

Looking back in rather lighter vein, a host of memories spring to mind—not all of them too amusing at the time! We have had floods and black-outs at Egerton Park, and a flood, too, at the Pavilion, when a misguided stage-hand released the sprinkler system onto our newly-painted pantomime scenery! There was the Goose (by arrangement with Mr. Leslie Steen) in the “Mother Goose” pantomime, who sat down during the song sheet number and couldn’t get up again! Less calamitously, we have the memory of the happy informality of our annual Penguin Ball, the cricket match when, with our friends from “Starlight Rendezvous,” we rather surprisingly defeated a town side, the many fêtes opened and competitions judged, the many and varied luncheon societies addressed, the vast amount of hospitality, both official and informal, extended to us—the innumerable treasured memories of a decade of residence in this delightful town.

But chiefly, and inevitably, our memories are of the theatre. The comradeship, the perseverance, the striving, and the routine but purposeful application; the gaiety and unselfishness, the warmth and the guts (there is no synonym) of the Repertory actor and actress which make them, for my money, the salt of the earth; the “belly-laugh” coming rolling back from the audience, and their desperate silence when suspense had them in grip; and above all, those moments when setting, lighting, production and acting have enabled the play to “flame amazement” on the audience—the occasional miracle of the theatre which all its inhabitants know, and by which, indeed, they live.

Yes, these have been ten good years for the Penguin Players while they have been in Bexhill; and—I dare to hope—ten better years for many in Bexhill for our being here. And, whether it will be us or those who may follow us who will be in charge in ten years’ time, my wife and I most heartily say: “Here’s to the Next Ten!”

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“Penguins” in other Towns

Less than a year after we had opened in Bexhill we were invited, in March, 1951, to send a company to the Hippodrome Theatre, Margate, for an eight-week season. Robert Howard went in charge of it, with John Carter as Scenic Artist, and Peggy Paige and Richard Burnett both went across to play in several plays. Among the artists in the company were Dennis Chinnery, who later became so well-known in Bexhill and has since become a featured player at the Old Vic and is now leading man at the Pitlochry Festival; Ian Hewitson, the young local actor who has appeared frequently at Bexhill, particularly in the pantomimes, and is now at the Mermaid Theatre; and Betty Wolfe, now playing ‘Mrs. Pearce’ with great success in *My Fair Lady* at Drury Lane.

Our next venture away from home was when the Clacton-on-Sea Corporation invited us to give a Summer season in the Prince’s Theatre there in 1952. This was so successful that we have since returned every year except one—though this year we have moved to a different theatre, the West Cliff, which is really far more suitable for our type of presentation. This being our eighth season in Clacton, you may be sure that the name of the “Penguins” is almost as well-established, and we hope we may say as well-loved, as it is in Bexhill. Only a few years ago there, we gave her very first job, as A.S.M. and small part actress, to Angela Browne, who later played a season at the De La Warr Pavilion and is now a rising young star of the London stage. The present company includes Adele Strong, a great favourite here, and at the moment the young Bexhill boy-actor, Barry Henderson, is also appearing there.

Another town where we are very well-established, of course, is nearby Tunbridge Wells, where we are next week opening our sixth successive Summer season. This is near enough for us to have been able to “share” artists on many occasions, and we supply the scenery from our Bexhill workshop. From our Tunbridge Wells companies we have been pleased to find Oliver Fisher and Michael Napier-Brown for Bexhill; and our delightful juvenile Jennifer Wood first came to our notice there as a very keen (and capable!) young hopeful who offered to help out with any odd jobs with one of our pantomimes. Robert Howard has been in charge there for some years, but this Summer he is staying in Bexhill while a young producer, Brian Bell, who is new to the Penguins, takes charge.

There is no space, unfortunately, to go into any details about the many seasons which we have run in other towns. Some, of course, have been more successful than others, but we feel sure we can say that the Penguin companies have at all times given a good account of themselves, and the hundreds and hundreds of actors and actresses involved have helped to build up a high reputation for the management which has controlled them from Bexhill. The towns we have played in are: Bexhill, Bournemouth, Buxton, Clacton, Cleethorpes, Eastbourne, Keighley, Margate, Morecombe, Peterborough, Sheffield and Tunbridge Wells.

An outstanding event in our development came in December, 1958, when we were invited to become the resident Repertory Company at the Devonshire Park Theatre in the neighbouring and friendly town of Eastbourne, opening with our *Aladdin* pantomime. The time we have spent there since has been a most happy one. At the moment the Devonshire Park Theatre is presenting a season of touring companies, but we have a company at the Royal Hippodrome playing a Festival of Agatha Christie Plays until the end of September. Meanwhile we are due to re-open at the Devonshire Park in August, when our first production will be *A View from the Bridge*, with many of the cast who gave such a brilliant performance of it in the De La Warr Pavilion in May this year.

At the moment of going to press it seems that another exciting project has just cropped up. Only a few hours ago two Directors of the Empire Theatre in Belfast flew over to come and ask if we can arrange with them to present a season of Penguin Productions there this Summer, and we hope by the time that you read this that this projected season will be almost under way. What we found so gratifying about it was that our friends from Belfast said they wanted the Penguin Players because of their high reputation, and that they would like to be the first to present us in Ireland! News may not always travel fast—but Penguin news certainly seems to travel far!

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A Supporters' Club?

How about a Supporters' Club for the Penguin Players? This is a suggestion which has often been put to my wife and myself, and one which we find most stimulating. We have been a little reluctant to start anything moving because it has always seemed to us that such a club—though incidentally it should certainly be able to bring much interest and pleasure to its members—would by its nature exist chiefly to provide practical support to Penguin Players Ltd.; and though this company is a non-profit distributing body, nevertheless it is obvious that any of us who draw a salary from it have a vested interest in its success!

At the keen instigation of several of our patrons, however, I have agreed to take this opportunity to try to sound the feelings of our audiences on this subject, and to invite any of you who care to do so to *write* to me and let me know whether you think such a club would be a good idea, and if so what form it might take, and what its main activities should be. (Dear readers, no telephone calls, please.)

Certain ideas, of course, are fairly obvious. The club, which might be known as the Repertory Supporters Club, or more succinctly, as the Penguin Club, could hold regular—say monthly—meetings at which there could be talks or discussions on matters of general or local theatrical interest, and occasional visits from celebrities such as those we enjoyed recently during the Theatre Festival from Philip King and Henry Sherek. It might, or it might not, aim at having its own premises for social or cultural purposes. It could promote social activities in aid of Penguin Players Ltd., and with their co-operation—surely a Theatrical Garden Party is a real possibility? (Or even a Theatrical Roof-Garden Party on the top of the De La Warr Pavilion?) It might be possible to grant members a reduced price for a regularly booked seat—but with no remission if it is not used, to encourage them to pass it on elsewhere. The club might like to sponsor certain difficult or expensive cultural productions; it might like to form its own Drama Group and to enjoy the interest and help of the professional company; it might like to supply “crowd” or “small-bit” players to help the Penguin Players with big productions. Some of its members might like to form a working party to help the Penguins in many practical ways, and a little sewing or ironing or office work or a thousand and one other things would often be very acceptable. These are just a few rather impromptu ideas which make me think the club could give real pleasure to its members and valuable assistance to the Penguin Players in these particularly difficult times.

We should have to be careful that the two—the Club and Penguin Players Ltd.—retained their strict independence from each other; but there is surely ample scope for co-operation and mutual benefit between the two. What do *you* think?

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A scene from the Theatre Festival production of "Twelfth Night"—May 1960

THE PENGUIN PLAYERS

1950-60

A

Abbott, Christopher
Adair, Daisy
Adams, Norman
Alexander, Peter
Atkinson, Hazel
Assender, Peter
Alexander, Frank
Andrews, Keith
Arnold, Robert
Argyle, Sheila
Ashby, Jeffrey
Attwood, Kitty

B

Barfoot, Geoffrey
Barnard, Molly
Barnes, Edward
Bartlett, George
Barton, Jane
Beare, Beryl
Beint, Michael
Benge, Eileen
Benson, Elizabeth
Berry, Michael
Biscoe, Brian
Black, Eunice
Blackburn, Pauline
Blackburne, Barbara
Blake, David
Blythe, Michael
Borton, June-Mary
Brearley, Peter
Britton, Roy
Brooks, Denis
Brown, Eve
Browne, Angela
Burke, Gisela
Burke, Honora
Burnett, Richard
Butcher, Peggy
Butterworth, Peter

C

Calin, Frances
Cameron, Janet
Campbell, Meriam
Carpenter, Joyce
Carpenter, Richard
Carter, Betty
Carter, Donald
Carter, John
Carter, Sarah
Cass, Martin
Chapman, Clive
Chinnery, Dennis
Clayton, Mary
Cornish, Anthony
Cruikshank, Graeme
Cuka, Frances
Curle, John
Curnock, Lolette

D

Davey, Peter
Davies, Howard
Deepprose, George
Denville, Terence
Desmond, Patrick
Devlin, Eileen
Dunlop, Valerie
Durrant, Patricia

E

Earland, Norman
Ellis, Deirdre
Elsworth, Cecilie
Essex, Ronald
Evans, Andrée

F

Fawcett, Diana
Fisher, Oliver
Fogarty, Jan
Foster, Julia
Fowler, Martin
Friis, Elizabeth
Frost, Ian

G

Gale, Marjorie
Gallagher, Morrie
Gardner, Gordon
Garnett, Penelope
Geddis, Peter
Gilbert, Dorothy
Goffin, Angela
Gordon, Donald
Gott, Elizabeth
Graham, Raymond
Grainger, Phill
Gray, Patricia
Green, Daphne
Griffiths, Gwen
Griffiths, Olwen
Gulliver, Clifford

H

Hadler, Carol
Hague, Vivien
Hales, Jacqueline
Harvey, Stephen
Hayworth, Beryl
Hemming, David
Henderson, Barry
Henderson, Dorothy
Henderson-Tate, David
Herbert, Pauline
Herrington, John
Hewitson, Ian
Hirst, Hilda
Hollingbery, Vilma
Hollyfield, Michael
Hollyhead, Michael
Hopkins, Joanna
Houston, Stella
Howard, Robert
Howard, Sally
Hubble, A. D.
Hudson, Anne
Hughes, Ruby

I

Ingram, John
Irwin, James
Ives, Douglas

J

Johncock, Pauline
Jones, Alison
Jowett, Derek
Joyner, Vernon

K

Kaye, Charles
Keith, Carole
Kendrick, William
Kerr, David
King, Ruth

L

Lacey, Vivien
Latimer, Margaret
Lee, Frederick
Lestrangle, Laura
Lillicrap, Lawrence
Lister, Anthony
Llewellyn, Mary
Locke, Sheelagh
Loring, Pauline

M

Macgregor, Bathia-Saye
Maloney, David
Maltby, H. F.
Mann, Eunice
Mansell, Ronald
Manson, Jean
Marvin, Hilda
McBean, Douglas
McCormack, Janice
McNeff, Richard
Metcalfe, Edgar
Miller, Barbara
Millican, Anthony
Mitchell, Elaine
Morgan, Ivy
Morris, Joanna
Morton, Anthony
Moynihan, Daniel
Mundy-Castle, Jenny
Murton, Harry

N

Napier-Brown, Michael
Newcombe, Grace
Nimmo, Jennifer
Norman, Robert
Norreys, Anthony

O

Overton, Isabel

P

Paice, Vera
Paige, Peggy
Palmer, Anthony
Parker, Della
Parsons, Elizabeth
Pascoe, Mervyn
Paton, Ann
Pearce, Eve
Pearson, Christopher
Pember, Ronald
Pemberton, Michael
Pettitt, Michael
Phillips, Margaret
Pickering, Donald
Pike, Oliver
Plinge, Walter
Polak, Peter
Poole, Joanne
Portch, Yvonne
Powell, Christopher
Pulman-Jones, Annabelle

R

Raven, Joan
Rawlings, Anthony
Raymond, John
Rippon, Michael
Roberts, Bryn
Robson, Anne
Roberts, June
Roberts, Marion

Roberts, Nancy
Rolston, Louise
Rose, Norman
Rosslyn, Lorna
Rush, David
Russell, Heather
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S

Rutherford, Peter
Sawtell, Iain
Scott, Doris
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Scott, William
Selous, Reginald
Selway, John
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Shallow, Peter
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Steen, Leslie
Stephens, Piers
Strong, Adele
Stuart, Anthony
Suliman, Margaret

T

Tabberer, Dora
Tallersall, Rosamunde
Tawse, Hilary
Tomlinson, Derek
Tracey, Jill
Tree, Daniel
Trevor Davis, Susan
Tucker, Alan
Turner, Aidan

U

Underhill, Frank

V

Vickers, Brian
Vickers, Thalia

W

Walker, Donald
Walker, Mollie
Walmsley, Vivien
Walter, Brenda
Wayne, Margaret
Webb, Donald
Wells, Douglas
Wells, Leon
Wiesener, Bill
Williams, Geoffrey
Williams, Idwal
Willis, Kathleen
Wilson, Patrick
Wilson, Pauline
Wilson, Pilton
Winnard, David
Wolfe, Frank
Womack, Richard
Wood, Jennifer
Woodward, Rosamunde
Woodard, Robert
Whitford, Mimi
Wright, Greenville
Wyatt, Peter

Y

Young, Felicity



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